

# City Council Minutes

## Tuesday, September 27, 2022

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### Call to Order

Mayor Chase called the meeting to order at 6:07 PM, City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called the roll.

### Attendees

Council members Clarissa Pace, Cedric Leonard, Michael James, Al Peer, and Mike Wigley were present.

Council members Mark Tiner, Craig McRae and Claudia Hartness were absent.

### Approval of Minutes

Clarissa Pace moved to approve the July and August minutes, Al Peer seconded, an yay nay vote was called for, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

### Reports and Presentations

a. Public Works – Charlie Hammock

This past month they fixed 23 water leaks and ditched some streets, cleaning out a lot of trash throughout the city. The lake road has been graded for the shooting competition. They moved the grader to the East Plant where they proceeded to work on the road out there, getting it ready for Denali to bring their trucks in for the sludge removal. They got a pump and are pumping it from one pond to the other. On Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, they set up for Weevil Welcome. They bushhogged several places around town. Calls have been coming in about potholes. Asphalt was obtained from the county and fixed what they could. Asphalt is hard to get because they're using the hot mix for the relaying of Hwy 138 and once they get more cold mix they'll start fixing more potholes.

b. Water Operator – Wayne Morphis

Wayne Morphis was not in attendance but Mayor Chase relayed that he had stated "the water was good and wet".

c. Senior Citizen Center – Cindy Villarreal

They recently lost two seniors that were dear to them, Wanda Young and Francis Jordan. This past month they served a total of 3,103 meals, with 2,182 being delivered. They're up to 78 home deliveries a day. That day, they served 152 meals total for the day, with about 41 meals out the door and 24 meals in house. They continue to remain busy.

d. Fire – Eric Chisom

Fire Chief Eric Chisom was not in attendance.

e. Police – Jason Akers

Jason presented a special guest, Arika Davis, whose picture was chosen at the beginning of the school year for 'Best Back to School Picture'. The Monticello Police Department held a contest on their personal Facebook page to help motivate kids get up and ready for school and whoever posted and won got to be Chief for the Day. Arika attends Drew Central and on Wednesday, the Monticello Elementary representative chief for the day. Arika reads a little over 200 words per minute and is super smart. She

kept the police department on schedule a lot better than they normally are. Arika read the patrol division statistics for the month of August. There were a total of 8,322 miles driven, 650 calls to service, 46 total escorts, 2 domestics, 32.5 court hours, 102 citizens assists, 29 total arrests, 38 total accidents, 6 court papers, and 79 total reports taken. Jason thanked Arika's mother, Mrs. Jackson, and the rest of the Drew Central staff for making it such an easy thing. Arika learned how 911 worked, she flew the drone, road in a patrol car, went to District Court and met Judge Anderson's staff and she met the mayor where they talked about her running for mayor, governor, and president. Her favorite food is rice and cheese. She did a good job and had a good day. The only thing that they had on the agenda was the resolution authorizing the purchase of body cameras, which they applied for a grant to get earlier in the year. It will replace all of the cameras and will cover roughly 75% of the total cost.

f. Parks – Taylor James and Gerald Shephard

Fall ball has officially started, Miracle League started that night, soccer starts next Monday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, so the Parks Department has been busy. The volleyball court has officially been built at Jordan Park, with work being finished last week. They've received the basketball hoops, which they're hoping to install during the coming week. The lights at McCloy Park are finished, with the old poles were taken out and the new lights were installed. Mowing is slowing down. The lights at Burlington Field were fixed yesterday, Monday September 26<sup>th</sup>. Mike Wigley asked about the cover over the bleachers – they've been ordered but it has been taking quite a while to get in. Mayor Chases stated that we're having the same problem as the public with supply issues. Taylor James added that Game and Fish is working with the Master Gardeners to help maintain and mow the pollinator habitats. The Master Gardeners are looking at putting up signs to help educate everybody on what the pollinator habitats are for. Al Peers asked about a contract with Game and Fish pertaining to the pollinator habitats – there isn't a contract. The Master Gardeners asked for permission to start the habitat, to help create pollinator areas.

g. MEDC – Nita McDaniel

Reports were emailed. Lottery sales have been increasing over time. The MEDC meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> at noon at the Monticello Country Club until they can get everything cleaned up in their building. The MEDC has three large businesses in active recruitment project and four retailers they've responded with packets of information, so they're working hard on the recruitment side.

h. Planning Commission – Dan Boice

No Report

i. City Inspector – Brian Rodgers

Since last month, they've had three new ordinance 630's. The last two month's they were supposed to have four, but they've all gotten into compliance. They've had eleven new ordinance 756's and one SNAP that is still unfinished, but it about to be complete. Starting October 3<sup>rd</sup> at 8 am they will start talking applications for 2023 SNAP and they have 16 spots available that will fill really quickly.

## Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

## New Business

A. Cliff Gibson to Speak on behalf of Drew County Museum Board

Cliff Gibson was amazed, listening to the reports, and stated that Monticello is alive and well. He was there to request assistance to help preserve a historical building in Drew County, though it is not within the city

limits of Monticello. The Arkansas Historical Preservation helped them to receive a grant in the amount of \$44,316.00 to preserve the structure, it has a match of \$22,158.00, with a total project of \$66,474.00. They are in the process of moving forward because of a push timewise to get moving on the project. The Quorum Court guaranteed the match. Cliff Gibson was there to ask the City on behalf of the Drew County Museum, the Historical Society, and everybody that is interested in their heritage, to ask the City to meet Drew County halfway on the match, which is \$11,079.00. He wishes he was asking more, but that was it. The county and the city has a long history in partnership when it comes to historical preservation. Clarissa Pace said she had read the history of the school and saw that the residents are more tied to Dermott and Chicot County than Drew County and whether they have asked Dermott or Chicot County to help on the project – no, it's in Drew County and was unaware of any attempt to go and ask any other county to help with preservation. Brian Rodgers stated that the Drew County Museum have received \$5,000.00 per year for a long time, but that Zach Tucker had raised it to \$7,500.00 per year. Tommy Gray stated that by working together, we can be more of a tourist town. They tried asking Chicot county and other towns for donations for other museums that they didn't get the help they needed. Mike Wigley asked for clarification on their mission to refurbish it and to maintain it at its current location, with no plans on moving it anywhere – no, it is in Drew County, in the corner of Drew County. Mayor Chase stated that the Jerome school building is a part of us, just like our fingers are a part of us and acknowledged that yes, we do have a lot of infrastructure problems and other things we could spend our money on, we don't exclude our parks or other things our city does that give us quality of life and her opinion was that it was a very worthy way to spend \$11,079.00 to support the building and to keep it alive and to support not only Drew County, but in Southeast Arkansas. We are alone down here, or it feels like it and unless we stand up and preserve what we have, we will cease to exist. Clarissa Pace introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Al Peer seconded and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Clarissa Pace asked if where it stated that the expense amount that would increase from \$7,500.00 to \$18,600.00 was that stating it was from the General Fund and that's where the funding was coming from – yes. City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called roll and the motion passed unanimously.

**B. Resolution Certifying Balance Owed on 306 West Wood Ave**

Michael James introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Al Peer seconded, City Clerk called roll, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Brian Rodgers says that this has been going on for four or five months, mainly because the grass was out of control. He eventually had it mowed and charged the owner the \$133.50 for the cost of mowing. A few weeks ago, the company emailed him and asked for the tax ID for the city and he hadn't heard from them again until earlier today when they informed him that their team came down to mow it and wanted him to make sure it was in compliance. He in turn told them that he had a bill and it was going up for lien and they promised to pay it in the next 7-10 business days and stated that if they approved it, he would hold it and if they didn't pay it, he would file it. Michael James moved to approve, Clarissa Pace seconded, City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called roll and the motion passed unanimously.

**C. Ordinance to Increase Solid Waste Rates**

Clarissa Pace introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Al Peer seconded, City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called roll, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Mayor Chase pointed out that the last the solid waste rates were previously raised in 2020, before that in 2012 and was first adopted in 1974, with it only having been raised the two times since. The city had to cash a CD of \$58,600.00 for the Solid Waste account. Clarissa Pace moved to approve, Cedric Leonard seconded, City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called roll and the motion passed.

#### D. Ordinance to Increase Sewer Rates

Al Peer introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Clarissa Pace seconded, City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called roll and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Clarissa Pace asked how long it had been since the sewer rates have been increased – they were raised in 2020, 2004 and 1949, so since 1949 rates have been raised twice. Michael James questioned the discrepancy between the letter from the ANRC and the ordinance. The letter from ANRC stated that the minimum gallons billed should start at 1,000 and the ordinance says 2,000 gallons. Mayor Chase expressed that she hopes they would still vote on it now as she believes it was a typo in their letter and that they intended to state 2,000 gallons and not 1,000 and if it wasn't correct they could revisit it in the October council meeting. Clarissa Pace asked if they acknowledged it – they acknowledged the typo in their previous letter, where they had stated water rates instead of sewer rates, but they did not change the 1,000 gallons to 2,000 gallons. Mayor Chase called to verify if that was in fact a typo but had yet to hear back on whether or not it was. Mayor Chase asked City Attorney Whit Barton if it was okay to pass the ordinance – what matters is what the council passes, the City of Monticello City Council passes the rates for the City of Monticello, the Department of Agriculture is advisory and is an important funding source for the city. They have suggested an increase beginning at 1,000 but the ordinance states 2,000, which is believed to be their true recommendation and would start at 2,000 and would be a rate more in line for our consumers, in other words, the rate increase wouldn't happen until 2,000. Michael James stated that they're basing their recommendations on revenue and would like it to start at 1,000 gallons when the ordinance states 2,000 gallons, they would still be short of their recommendation. City Attorney Whit Barton wanted to make it clear that if it were passed tonight, it does have an emergency clause that would put it into effect immediately and if it turned out that it was 2,000 gallons, they're fine and if was meant to be 1,000 gallons they'd have one month billing at too low of a rate. Council would have the chance to come back in October and move the 2,000 gallons down to 1,000 gallons, but the city would still have the income from the other sources. Under no circumstances is the city prejudicing the consumers because they would be billed consistent with the recommendation or below the recommendation. The only concern is the discrepancy between 1,000 gallons and 2,000 gallons, that it's safe to do that, but it can be addressed in a month and they still could reap the benefits of the increase. The alternative is to table it for a month and the city wouldn't get any of the increase in revenue. Michael James asked if they tabled it until the 25<sup>th</sup> of October and got clarity on the discrepancy, it would still work – yes, it would just change the revenue. This is for the necessity of a loan that the city hasn't even received yet – yes. Michael James expressed that he would rather get clarification before voting on it. City Attorney Whit Barton stated that he didn't want council to vote on it and then authorize the mayor to pull it back if this or that happened and if they pass it, its passed and they can continue it or pass it knowing they can come back and adjust next month. Clarissa Pace moved to table it until next month when they can get clarification on the number of gallons, Al Peer seconded, City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called roll and the motion was tabled until the October meeting.

#### E. Resolution to begin drainage project for Merrydale and Davis Street

There was no resolution. It was discussed at a previous council meeting, where Al Peer was adamant that the drainage project at Merrydale and Davis Street took priority, but it was not previously put in the minutes. It was discussed that with the first round of the American Rescue Plan or ARPA money, there is \$623,000.00 left from it, with salary stipends being paid from it. They had previously discussed that with the balance of the ARPA funds, they would start at Merrydale and Davis and continue the project and get as many of them completed as possible. Mayor Chase asked for a formal resolution. McClelland Engineering has already started by surveying and designing, with one invoice for it having been received but not yet paid, as it is being held until there is a formal resolution in place. McClelland first said it would be \$87,000.00 for this project but the figures are a bit higher. Cedric Leonard asked what changed with

the amounts given in the 15-year plan that McClelland provided earlier in the year – fuel prices, supply chain interruptions, freight increases, parts increases, and just general real-world problems. Al Peer asked if for the Merrydale and Davis Street to move forward, would the \$87,000.00 price listed in plan get the job finished – no, not if you stick with the \$87,000.00. It was talked about increasing that line item of money in order to get as many projects done with the amount of money we have. Finance Director Vickie Norris stated that there were no expenses budgeted from the ARPA money, so we have to have something authorizing them to spend the money and then it would breakdown between engineering and actually fixing the problem, leaving them with two line items for a total as you went, of \$623,000.00. After it was discussed in the previous council meeting, Mayor Chase told McClelland to not expend more money than the City has in the account and they've hardly started and we have only received the one invoice. We don't have to spend the whole amount and can only choose to spend \$80,000.00, \$90,000.00 or \$120,000.00 on doing Merrydale and Davis Street. Cedric Leonard asked who would do the work – after the design work is done, we would have to bid the job and whoever wins the bid would do the work. City Attorney Whit Barton stated that once the bids are in, if council authorizes McClelland to prepare the designs and authorize the administration to bid to the specifications the engineer prepared, that would be something council can approve tonight and once bids were in, it would be revisited then. Michael James asked if McClelland had already been authorized to do the work and if that was something that was already paid for – no, as there was no formal resolution and it was verbally said but was never put in the previous minutes. If council wished to move forward, the City is resolved to employ McClelland to prepare the design plans and specifications for this particular project in the stated areas and to authorize the administration to bid and once that process is complete, the bids will come out and council then can accept a bid. The \$87,000.00 from the 15-year plan was nothing more than a recommendation. According to Finance Director Vickie Norris, the contract amount for the drainage from Davis to Merrydale on Work Order No. 9 is \$15,300.00 for the contract amount for engineering services. Michael James asked if we have a contract with them – they're developing Work Order No. 9 which will be the outline for the project and is just the work order and not the construction contract. Michael James stated that months ago, maybe even a year ago, council had authorized them to conduct this study on a drainage basin and proceeded to ask, was this not the same thing – it wasn't specific. All council members agreed that it was pretty specific, but Mayor Chase said that was not the same as the 15-year plan and that all resolutions were searched and nothing was found in our records after it was discussed and verbally agreed upon. City Attorney Whit Barton stated that it wasn't put into print and it was created after the conclusion of the engineer's presentation and it didn't make it into the minutes and was never memorialized. Cedric Leonard asked if McClelland would have to come down to do an engineering plan, what was done when they came up with the figure of the \$87,000.00 in their 15-year plan – there is a plan and it does exist, but that was not specific to this job and it was just a general idea. McClelland Engineering, without surveying gave just a rough estimate on what it would cost and did not get into the weeds. City Attorney Whit Barton asked what the invoice was specifically for – the weeds, consisting of a topographical survey and design. The invoice is for draftsman 2, draftsman 3, project engineer 1, project engineer 4, easement preparation and services during construction and consists of the specifications that would allow us to bid the project. A resolution authorizing the payment of the invoice in order to finish the design process and to bid the project is what is required to move forward. Clarissa Pace asked for clarification on whether or not they've already done the work – yes, they've already started and pictures were sent out of McClelland doing the surveying between Davis and Merrydale to all council members and the reason they went ahead with this project was because they were given verbal confirmation two plus months ago from council after it was made clear that they still have the funds from ARPA to move forward with this portion of the drainage and make significant progress in this city's drainage problem. McClelland went ahead after it was verbally agreed upon at the council meeting they attended that this was the priority at the moment, we just don't

have the proof in the minutes or a resolution. A resolution authorizing the first phase of this drainage project, authorizing the payment of the invoice and to authorize the specifications from the engineering design to go to bid, which ultimately could exist in the records, but council can authorize it all in a resolution. Michael James asked if the resolution that passes tonight will be specific to any dollar amount – just the \$15,300.00 that the project states on the invoice and no other amount and once the bids come in, that will be a different resolution. City Attorney Whit Barton has verbalized the title of the resolution and Cedric Leonard moved to approve, Al Peer seconded, City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called roll and the motion passed unanimously. Michael James requested that research be done because the city had previously authorized a study on the basins that make up the city and wants to make sure the city isn't paying double for something that has already been done.

F. Resolution Authorizing Purchase of Body Cameras for Monticello Police Department

Michael James introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Al Peer seconded, City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called roll and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Clarissa Pace moved to approve, Michael James seconded, City Clerk Kirstin Garrison called roll and the motion passed unanimously.

G. Discussion with Deacon Jones

Deacon William Jones thanked city council and Mayor Chase for allowing him to speak and was there as a concerned citizen of Monticello. He was there to discuss Walmart Access Road and Hwy 425 and at 8 a.m., 12 p.m., and 3 p.m., it is impossible to make a left hand turn onto Hwy 425 from Walmart Access Road. The same goes for turning out of AT&T. There have been a lot of close accidents. He asked if it would be feasible to install a traffic light at that intersection and if not a traffic light, would it be feasible to put a sign placed there to keep people from turning left during those times – the city doesn't have any authorization on placing a light or signs and this would be a decision that ARDOT or the highway department would have to make. Mike Wigley stated that even if they could give the okay for the signs to be placed there, it would cause a problem for the business in the area, as people would be cutting through their parking lots to avoid the signs telling to not turn left. People already don't follow signage rules as is. Michael James stated that he had talked to Eric Chisom in regard to the driveway placement for the new carwash on the highway and that the permit for the building was approved by the city but the placement of the driveway was approved by ARDOT. Deacon Jones asked if there was a way to time the lights at the Wal-Mart entrance and the light the Hwy 425/278 intersection so that they're synchronized – it can be looked in to. Michael James pointed out that there was a sign next to McDonalds that is intended to keep people from turning left and it doesn't really keep them from doing so and the sign was knocked down so many times before they stopped putting it back up. Mayor Chase stated that when Deacon Jones initially came to her about this issue, she told him to never turn left and to always turn right because it's the safer way to drive and she agreed that it is a problem but with the number of lights that we have, she was doubtful that ARDOT would install a new light. If council was okay with it, Mayor Chase would be happy to call and ask ARDOT if it were plausible for lights or signs and if not, to at least synchronize the lights.

Mayor Chase asked to amend the agenda to add one more item. Cedric Leonard motioned to approve, Michael James seconded, and aye/nay vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.


1. Amanda Nall with Standing in Unity for Monticello

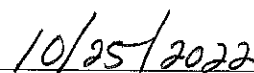
Amanda Nall stated "we the committee of the Moving Mountains for Monticello and for the Our Festival event that happened here recently would like to publicly announce that we will no longer be associated with the Moving Mountains for Monticello and/or Bart Gregory. We as former members of the Moving Mountains for Monticello would also like to apologize to the city and to Mayor Paige Chase for all of the

negative acts against you. Everyone in this committee came together to find ways that we could bring our community together. This has not changed. We will continue this effort as a committee known as Standing in Unity for Monticello. We have begun the process of getting events together for next year and we have looked at other Monticello citizens and businesses that will want to help us unify this community. We have a great town with wonderful people and we as a community want to show others how great Monticello is." Cedric Leonard asked if Standing in Unity for Monticello had a contact number – yes, she can be reached at 870-723-2373 or H and AR Block or One 11 Southern Graphics, as they are also part of the committee. Mike Wigley stated that Amanda and a couple of the other committee members had attended the A&P Commission meeting the night before and they had a great conversation with them and that A&P would be able to do some things to help them. Mayor Chase appreciated their statement and did not know anything that was about to happen and wish she had and would have done anything in her power to help. She shared her support of Monticello, its citizens and anything they do to come together and even though there were problems with Our Festival this year, it still was a great event for Monticello and unless you were one of the parties involved in the creation of that, nobody knew what they were missing. If nothing was said, nobody would have known. The responsibilities of the government and the city is not to supply entertainment, but to make it a healthy and safe place to live and throwing festivals is not what we're supposed to do. The A&P Commission is not responsible for throwing festivals either as they have a set goal by ordinance, that help to enhance our life and we can come together but that was created and done successfully by volunteers and we have some many volunteers in our community. Food Truck Friday, Our Festival, the skeet shoot and the lighting ceremony that took place at Jordan Park last December, were all carried out by volunteers. Volunteers they're what move mountains and that is what needs to happen. Mayor Chase thanked Amanda Nall and Standing in Unity for Monticello for her statement and their efforts and hopes it succeeds for many years. Jennifer Jeffers with Standing in Unity for Monticello added that it was a great festival. They had over 91 vendors from around Arkansas and surrounding states, there were 14 food trucks from all around and they had a great turn out and fun dancing. There will definitely be a festival next year.

## Adjournment

Cedric Leonard moved to adjourn the meeting, Al Peer seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

  
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City Clerk

  
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Date of Approval